

Message Text

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12

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02 NSC-05 PA-01

RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05 IO-10 /064 W

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FM AMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9040

INFO CINCPAC HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY SAIGON PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 1413

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS CB

SUBJECT: TWENTY-THIRD DAY OF KC DRY SEASON OFFENSIVE

REF: PHNOM PENH 1273

1. SUMMARY: THE MEKONG RIVER CONVOY ARRIVED IN PHNOM PENH JANUARY 23, BATTERED BUT INTACT. THE KC FIRED MORE ROCKETS AT POCHENTONG AIRPORT, BUT DAMAGE WAS MINIMAL. KC PRESSURE HAS INCREASED SLIGHTLY IN SEVERAL AREAS AROUND PHNOM PENH. END SUMMARY.

2. THE SMALL CONVOY, COMPOSED OF TWO AMMUNITION BARGES AND THREE TUGS, ARRIVED IN PHNOM PENH SHORTLY BEFORE NOON, JANUARY 23, AND MOST OF THE FOREIGN PRESS CORPS HERE WAS IN ATTENDANCE. THEY WERE REWARDED BY SEVERAL ROUNDS OF WHAT WE BELIEVE TO BE 107MM ROCKETS WHICH WERE FIRED AS THE CONVOY CAME IN. ONE HIT A BARGE CAUSING SLIGHT DAMAGE AND THE OTHERS LANDED IN THE RIVER. THE CONVOY SUSTAINED ATTACKS BY FIRE DURING A GOOD PART OF ITS DIFFICULT PASSAGE TO PHNOM PENH. AT SEVERAL POINTS, CIVILIAN CREWS OF THE TUGS AND BARGES WERE RELUCTANT TO CONTINUE. HOWEVER, THANKS TO A GENERALLY EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE BY

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THE KHMER NAVY AND AIR FORCE, THE CONVOY ARRIVED

BASICALLY INTACT, ALTHOUGH ONE OF THE BARGES IS LISTING BADLY AND IS BEING PUMPED. IT MAY HAVE TO BE BEACHED.

3. THE KC FIRED TWENTY 107MM ROCKETS LATE JANUARY 22 WHICH FELL OUTSIDE POCHENTONG. SIX MORE WERE REPORTED DURING THE MORNING OF JANUARY 23, THREE LANDING WITHIN POCHENTONG AIRPORT'S PERIMETER. ONE C-123 AIRCRAFT WAS SLIGHTLY DAMAGED.

4. THERE WAS NO CHANGE ALONG ROUTE 1 PARALLELING THE MEKONG SOUTHEAST OF PHNOM PENH AS FANK EFFORTS TO REDUCE THE PORTION OF THE ROAD CUT BY THE KC HAVE MADE LITTLE PROGRESS. THE CITY OF NEAK LUONG ON THE MEKONG CONTINUES TO RECEIVE KC ATTACKS BY FIRE, BUT THE SITUATION REMAINS RELATIVELY STABLE AND FANK DEFENDERS ARE HOLDING.

5. KC PRESSURE ON FANK POSITIONS NORTH AND NORTHWEST OF PHNOM PENH AS WELL AS IN THE OUDONG/LOVEK AREA ON ROUTE 5 HAS INCREASED SLIGHTLY IN THE PAST SEVERAL DAYS, BUT IS NOT SIGNIFICANT AT ITS PRESENT LEVEL.

6. THE KC STILL HOLD A PORTION OF ROUTE 6 IN NORTH-WESTERN CAMBODIA BETWEEN SIEM REAP AND THE THAI BORDER. THE SITUATION OTHERWISE REMAINS UNDER CONTROL.
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